

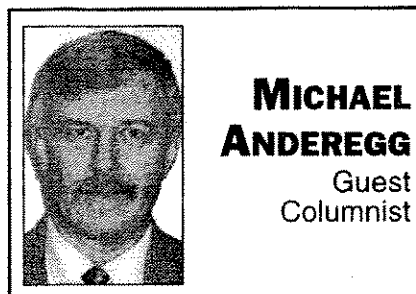
State honors adoption

Tuesday is Michigan Adoption Day. Adoption Day is a statewide celebration of the importance of safe, permanent families for children. Not every child is fortunate enough to grow up in a safe and stable environment. Each of us knows children who have lost a parent to death or divorce. We sometimes forget that children also lose parents because those parents have abused or neglected them.

A loving adoptive home gives such children a second chance. It gives them security, encouragement, and positive role models who can teach them how responsible adults behave.

Despite our best efforts, and the heroic efforts of foster families who provide temporary care for such children, there are children in Michigan, and here in Marquette County, who are growing up without a safe permanent family.

Research shows that such children lag behind their peers in many important areas: They are 51 percent less likely to be employed, 27 percent more likely to be jailed, 42 percent more likely to become a parent while still a teenager, and 25 percent



more likely to be homeless. If they "age out" of foster care without being adopted, they are truly on their own. Many experience substance abuse, domestic violence and poverty.

**Adoption Day is
an opportunity
for each of us
to reflect on the
importance of a
loving family
to a child's
development...**

Last year, 28 adoptions were finalized in the Family Division of the Marquette County Circuit Court. Some involved adoptions of stepchildren. Others involved adults or children whose biological parents consented to their

adoptions. Still others involved former foster children. Each of them was important.

Adoption Day is an opportunity for each of us to reflect on the importance of a loving family to a child's development, and to resolve to do whatever we can, individually, to assure that every child gets the opportunity to grow up in the kind of environment we want for our own children.

In the past two years, Marquette County has received three important awards: designation as an All-American County, listing as one of America's Most Livable Communities and most recently, in September recognition from the America's Promise Alliance as one of the 100 Best Communities in America for Young People.

Strong, stable families, including those provided by adoptions, help produce the kinds of community leaders we need to continue to earn similar recognition.

Hon. Michael J. Anderegg is the presiding judge of the Family Division of the Marquette County Circuit Court. He is president of the Upper Peninsula Probate Judges Association and past president of the Michigan Probate Judges Association.